

# THE INDYPENDENT

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## DEATH ON THE BORDER

BY EMILY PRICE

At least 15 young women have been reported missing in Chihuahua City during the past three years. Numerous bodies have been found and families want answers. Instead, they have been stonewalled by a police force they accuse of planting evidence, harassing family members and torturing innocent people into confessing. Who are the cops trying to protect?

CHIHUAHUA CITY, MEXICO —

The hills of Sierra NOMBRE de Dios are rocky and hard to climb. "The last journalist didn't make it to the top," says Patricia Cervantes as she parks her pickup truck at the base of one of the hills. It is at this site that two female bodies were found in late July by a group of teenagers going for a hike. The police claim one of them is Cervantes' 20-year-old daughter, Neyra Azucena.

Patricia climbs the dry, green terrain, stopping to remove her straw hat and hold her heart. Her husband Jesus stops to rest with her, as her 18-year-old daughter Alejandra Juarez speeds ahead.

"Come, come quickly!" shouts Carlos, Patricia's brother, from off in the distance. He has found something. There among the rocks and dirt, scattered around yellow police lines and cigarette butts, are three loose teeth, clumps of hair, bits of clothing and thick, decomposing bones on the top of the hill.

"This is a disgrace," Carlos says softly. The police claimed to have searched and removed all pertinent evidence from the area. Bits of plastic and an inspector's

latex glove contaminate the crime scene. Four young women's bodies have been found at this same site over the past year. Nine bodies in total have been found in the past two years, all in deserted areas throughout Chihuahua City, the state capital. Many of the bodies showed signs of rape and torture.

### NEYRA'S DISAPPEARANCE

Neyra Azucena Cervantes disappeared on the afternoon of May 13, 2003, on her way home from work at a downtown clothing store. Neyra had never come home late without calling her family. They immediately knew something was wrong and contacted the police, who insisted that she would return soon. The Cervantes family took matters into their own hands, putting up flyers and making phone calls to anyone who might have seen her. Her sister Alejandra remembers lying awake all night in the room they once shared, knowing that Neyra had been kidnapped.

At present, David Meza Argueta, a cousin of Neyra's, is accused of committing the murder. The police claim that Argueta hired two men to kidnap Neyra and then murdered her in Sierra NOMBRE de Dios. Mr. Argueta accompanied the family to identify the body the day after it was found, at which time he and Neyra's father, Jesus Argueta

Vargas, were detained. According to Mr. Vargas, who was released after 18 hours, the men were subjected to torture.

"They gave us electrical shocks, beat us, put water with gas up our noses and threatened to kill me if David did not sign the pre-written confession. David was afraid and signed, but it is all a lie fabricated by the police," said Mr. Cervantes. David spent a total of 36 hours in what is known as "the academy," the grounds the police use to torture suspects.

Neyra's uncle, Carlos Cervantes, spoke of the psychological torment by police. "They asked me if I liked Neyra's body, if she had ever let me touch her, things like that, sexual questions. I said that I wouldn't answer any more questions because they were offending me. How could I think of her body like that if she is my niece?"

The police had no leads during the two months Neyra was missing and detained David based upon his "behavior," according to an interview with police chief Vicente Mayorga in the Ciudad Juarez newspaper *El Diario*. No DNA test or other evidence has been presented. The Cervantes believe David was targeted because he spoke out against police negligence and dishonesty in the case of Neyra's disappearance. He remains in jail pending trial.

### FEMICIDE SPREADS

While Neyra's case is tragic, it is hardly unique. She is only one of at least 15 young women who have disappeared over the past three years in Chihuahua City. All were abducted downtown in broad daylight, while returning home from their jobs or computer classes. The women are decidedly similar. All come from lower-income families, and many of them worked in factories alongside their mothers to help support their families. The women share a similar physical profile — tall and slender, attractive, dark-skinned and between the ages of 14 and 20.

The cause of the disappearances remains unknown. Theories abound. Some claim the women have been forced into prostitution by narco-traffickers or snuff pornographers, while others suspect roving bands of serial killers or organ traffickers.

But suspicion falls most heavily on a computer school in downtown Chihuahua called ECCO. At least six of the young women attended classes and another nine had some type of connection to the school, having worked either there or on the same street.

The school hires young, good-looking men to approach young women like Neyra and offer them scholarships to study at the

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### WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to illuminate and analyze issues impacting individuals, communities and eco-systems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Independent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for The Independent, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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# HOWLING EAST VILLAGE

By SASHA NEVSKAYA

It's no secret that the East Village — former home to the Beat generation, hippies and punk culture — has come to resemble a glossy "Teen" magazine cover in the last decade. Many have noticed, but few took a stance — except Phil Hartman.

Last year, Hartman organized the Federation of East Village Artists (FEVA) to preserve the East Village as a pillar of the city's counterculture.

Now FEVA's E. 6th Street office is busy preparing to launch Howl — a 250-event and 50-venue production — with a mission to take over the East Village and once again make it a center for the arts. The week-long celebration will open on Aug. 19 with Reverend Billy's Benediction at St. Mark's Church.

The eagerly anticipated festival has created so much interest among both the business community and area residents that it has demonstrated the need for an organization with a range of social and educational goals.

"FEVA has grown organically out of the community and is here to serve the community's needs," says Hartman. "It

was nerve-racking overseeing a coalition that included anarchists and real estate developers, immigrant residents and avant-garde artists, ancient enemies and sworn adversaries."

Almost a year after its inception, FEVA is functioning largely as a volunteer-based organization helped by a few paid staff members.

While thankful for strong community support and the generosity of donors, FEVA strives for more financial backing. "We are providing many free events for the community, but it has to be paid for, and fundraising has been our biggest challenge," says Howl producer Barbara Saueremann.

"Hopefully, while making people grav-

itate back to East Village, the festival will become the financial foundation we need," adds Hartman's assistant Paul Hrusa. After the festival, FEVA will attempt to incorporate as a not-for-profit in order to seek larger funding sources.

FEVA's longstanding goals include outreach programs involving art and education. "FEVA seeks to advocate on behalf of artists for access to professional services, reasonably priced housing options and studio space. We also want to link artists with the local public schools which are desperately short of resources and to bring public art out of the galleries and into the streets," says Hartman.

"We are looking to revitalize the neighborhood," adds FEVA's office manager Miki Fujiwara. "If we do that as locals there will be no threat of future gentrification. We want the neighborhood to stay multi-ethnic, artist based and free-spirited."

FEVA's office is booming with energy. Just over a week away, Howl will set a standard for the future of the organization whose mission is to immortalize a recent — but quickly disappearing — past.

For more information: [www.howlfestival.com](http://www.howlfestival.com)

## SNOOPING

# LIBRARIES JOIN THE SPY GAME

By PANDI HOPKINS

Libraries are potentially sinister collections of information, according to the creators of the Patriot Act, section 215, which calls for expanded FBI surveillance of libraries and bookstores. Thus librarians are the ideal snoops and snitches.

These library surveillance provisions are actually a reincarnation of a counterintelligence initiative called the Library Awareness Program (1973-1988), which targeted the New York Public Library and other major libraries. When it finally became public, the operation met strong opposition. Most states passed privacy laws to protect library users, and the American Library Association officially called for the "immediate cessation of the FBI Library Awareness Program."

Once again, many librarians are combating this infringement of individual liberty with actions that require both courage and preparedness. A "gag rule" has made it illegal to divulge FBI inquiries after they have taken place.

A number of libraries have publicly announced their intention to remove all records, the only secure way to proceed under the circumstances. In March, library trustees in Santa Cruz agreed not only to expunge records in the branch libraries, but also to post signs explaining their reasons for doing so. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Congressman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) have each introduced bills to exempt libraries and bookstores from the Patriot Act.

On June 24, the NYPL Reference Library began requiring a special picture ID card for use of stack materials. Ray Markey, President of the New York Public Library Guild, feels that the Access card was probably created for innocuous reasons. "Still, that doesn't mean it won't be used for purposes for which it was not originally intended." He warns that in this repressive climate, "when war can be based on lies and Ashcroft runs the world... [there is]... no need to have more data collected to inhibit users and put fears into people's minds."

According to Elizabeth Diefendorfer,



**SPOOKS IN THE STACKS:** They want to know who's reading what. PHOTO: James Luckett

Chief Librarian of the NYPL's Reference Division, the Board of Trustees has decided not to keep any user records more than 24 hours after a book has been returned. "It was a very controversial decision. None of us, of course, wanted the FBI to get their hands on these records, but some felt that it would be useful to have more information about the users of our collection."

While no one on staff was completely satisfied with the decision, Diefendorfer says, all recognized that there had to be a balance between security of one of the world's prime collections and preserving a safe refuge for the public.

Rapid advances in electronic means for recordkeeping had made the Access card necessary. "The off-site facility for book preservation we are putting into place is great for the preservation of books," says Diefendorfer, "but requires an automated system that is immensely complex to handle. I agree it is a trade-off, and I had concerns."

Most likely, these concerns have to do with categories. When applying for an Access card, readers are asked to check "one category... that best describes you" from a wide variety of choices including medical services and manufacturing, consulting and

appraising. Glaring omissions include father, mother, poet or even author. Perhaps most disturbing of all, it does not include the conscientious citizen, the self-educator, or the simply inquisitive individual wandering in from the street seeking knowledge.

But such intrusive monitoring has happened before.

A song, "The House Un-American Blues," became an object of suspicion during the Cold War. Joe Hickerson, former head of the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song, recalls a request from the House Un-American Activities Committee for a list of "songs about the bomb." According to the tabulation of the Joint Committee on Nuclear Arms Reduction, of about 100 songs, 95 percent were anti-nuclear weapons, with 5 percent neutral.

The surveillance of library users with the latest technology has an interesting history. In 1976, the Church Committee was given the task of investigating FBI investigations. In their final report, committee members wrote: "Counterintelligence was a misnomer for the FBI programs, since the targets were American political dissidents, not foreign spies. ... Over the years Communist paranoia extended to civil rights, anti-war, and many other groups." (See [cointel.org](http://cointel.org).)

The Church investigation came in the wake of an historic legal decision in favor of individual privacy, *U.S. v. Ehrlichman*. From the early 1960s to 1973, NSA had compiled a so-called "Watch List," a register of political dissidents at the time, mostly anti-war activists.

And last May, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency announced its anti-terrorist plan: to provide U.S. agents with "fingertip access to records from around the world" in a database so huge its contents are measured in petabytes, according to AP reporter Michael Sniffen. One petabyte (which equals 1,000,000,000,000 bytes) would include room for nearly 40 pages of information on each of the 6.2 billion human beings on the planet.

## KOBE BRYANT & THE SEMIOTICS OF RAPE

By KATHERINE A. CARLSON

When Kobe Bryant accepted his Teen Choice award for favorite sports star on Aug. 4, he paraphrased Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., stating that "an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere." Something tells me he wasn't speaking on behalf of the thousands of sexual assault cases that go unreported every year.

Since the Bryant assault case broke on July 19, speculation has swirled about the future of his basketball career. Will the Lakers stand by him? Has this ruined his shot at the Hall of Fame? And above all, what about his multimillion dollar endorsement contracts?

When Bryant invoked Dr. King at the podium, he was presumably referring to the damage inflicted on his career by what he insists is a false accusation. However, no one seems willing to examine all that a survivor of assault stands to lose when she comes forward, and why anyone would willingly put themselves and their families through that kind of strain.

Believing a survivor without question isn't a flaw in our legal justice system; it's just the right thing to do. The majority of sexual assaults go unreported because women fear they'll be doubted — or worse — blamed for what happened to them. Maybe they even blame themselves and can't stand having friends and family look at them differently.

Which is exactly why the Kobe Bryant case is so terrifying. The Lakers' star and his defense team insist that the encounter was completely consensual, and that only after the fact did the woman see the incident as a window of opportunity for personal gain. After all, he's rich and famous, so just about everybody wants a piece of him, they argue.

Meanwhile, the media conducts a trial of its own: she's a golddigger and a jersey chaser, she asked for it, she led him on. Frankly, this isn't new. Similar scenarios unfold on college campuses across the country all the time, but they're usually hushed by a nervous RA or school administrator for fear of embarrassing the community.

In this case exposing the woman's identity has become a national pastime. Her home and email address, phone number and photograph appeared on several websites. In Los Angeles, a radio talk show host broke standard media courtesy and revealed her identity on the air. If pressing charges for assault officially makes a survivor's name public domain, report rates will likely decline and many more women will continue to carry their secret alone.

Bryant has already admitted to having sex with the woman, but we may never find out exactly what happened in that hotel room. Even if he truly believed that the act was consensual, any decent man would be horrified by the idea of causing a woman that much fear and pain.

Kobe's version of damage control included the purchase of a \$4 million diamond for his wife, Vanessa. While that superficial gesture may keep his marriage alive, it didn't take long before some began to accuse his victim of also being motivated by money.

So what is the subtext of this case for survivors across the country? If you come forward, we will not believe you.

As though survivors haven't had enough power taken from them already, they're now confronted with accusations that they themselves are perpetrators of a crime. Where's the justice in that?



**AFRO-BEAT DEMOCRACY:** While local elites and international corporations conspired to rob Africans of independence, Fela's sound kept people's hearts free. PHOTO: Justin Francis

# BLACK PRESIDENT

## FELA KUTI & THE SOUND OF REVOLUTION

By KAZEMBE BULAGOON

Fela Kuti, like Che Guevara, Bob Marley and Malcolm X, left us with multiple legacies. There's Fela Kuti, Afro-beat pioneer and revolutionary Pan-Africanist. There is also Fela, the sex machine, who with his crooked smile, intense gaze, tight jumpsuit and long (read phallic) saxophone could have been James Brown's long-lost African cousin. Fela the polygamist took 27 wives and constructed an autonomous nation called the Kalakuta Republic. And Fela the martyr died of AIDS, a disease ravaging the African continent.

These creative tensions, contradictions and insights are embodied in the New Museum of Contemporary Art's mixed media exhibit, "Black President: The Art and Legacy of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti."

Fela Kuti's life was as wide and explosive as his native Nigeria. Born on the cusp of independence, he was the son of middle-class parents who were active in the Nigerian liberation movement.

Rejecting the traditional colonial narrative that his family had established for him (his brother was the Nigerian Health Minister and his cousin is Nobel Prize laureate Wole Soyinka) he dropped out of medical school to explore London's modern jazz scene.

In 1969, Fela and his band Koola Lobitos toured the United States where he was introduced to the Black Panther Party and began reading Malcolm X. This left an indelible impression on the political direction of his music. Fela changed the name of his band to the Afrika 70 (later the Egypt 80) and began to pen protest songs like "Beasts of No Nation" and "International Thief Thief." A multi-instrumentalist, Fela created a

polyrhythmic wall of sound, often playing keyboards and saxophone. While many black artists stateside were going back to the mother land, Fela and many other West African performers were copying the fat funk beats of James Brown and the avant-garde posturing of Sun Ra. The combination of jazz with the West African "high-life" music gave birth to Afro-beat. Ever the folk artist, Fela sang in pidgin, a mix of English and the traditional languages of Nigeria.

Fela's popularity and dissent brought the wrath of the Nigerian government. Throughout the seventies his commune and nightclub were raided. Despite the jailing and assaults, Fela remained ever defiant, dubbing himself the "Black President." After his death from AIDS in 1997, over a million people attended his funeral.

"Black President," a commemorative group show arrives amid a popular revival of Fela's music statewide. In many ways having an art exhibit dedicated to Fela is redundant. A pioneer of performance art, with album covers that only rival those of Abdul Mati (famed for Miles Davis' Bitches Brew cover) in their depth and vibrancy, Fela understood the power of imagery in producing his sonic landscapes.

Still, for the 34 artists featured in "Black President," Fela's body of work, both musical and political, serves as an entry point to explore themes of colonialism, feminism, black-power aesthetics, and the continually twisting contradictions of a post-colonial Africa.

Fela's life and music represent a rejection of the normative values established by the neo-colonial ruling class who opened the oil markets to Chevron and Shell, bringing about the death of Ken Saro-Wira and the massive poverty of millions of

Nigerians. Odili Donald Oditia embraces this sentiment in his installation "Heaven Can Wait," which features a wheelbarrow full of Nigerian currency placed over a splash of oil.

Fela's popularity is located in the fact that he was both iconic and ironic, a fact not lost in "Black President." Barkeley Hendricks' (whose oil paintings stole the show at the Whitney's Black Male exhibit some years back) "Amen Amen Amen" plays with the ironic/iconic contrast by portraying Fela as a classic Renaissance Christ figure, replete with a halo and heart of thorns, and a firm hand grabbing his crotch while the other hand holds a spliff.

Yet Fela's reputation does not emerge from "Black President" unchallenged; his often problematic relationship to women is opened up for examination by the exhibit.

One installation, Yinka Shonibare's "Lady Na Master," plays on the hyper-sexualized space women occupied in Fela's universe by showing 27 African women dolls with their heads cut off. The highly erotic and two-spirit energy of Fela's performances is shown in Moyo Okedigbo's "Fela in Mamiwata Land," which represents the Black President as half-woman and half-marine animal.

What makes the exhibit "Black President" so compelling is the ability of the artists to expose and utilize multiple legacies. Like any good artist, Fela should be judged by his influences on future generations. In turn, it is up to new generations to re-mix these traditions into new forms. In many ways, "Black President" uses Fela's life and living legacy to challenge issues of race, sex and the African position in the 21st century, ironically the very same issues that Fela himself challenged.

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# THE LONG



## **R**etirees will pay too much for too little.

Seniors who enroll in the Bush Medicare drug plan will see their premiums rise 46 percent in exchange for minimal coverage. The House bill, for example, provides no coverage at all for annual drug costs between \$2,000 and \$5,100. Both bills would increase seniors' out-of-pocket costs each year with the rise in drug prices. An analysis by the Consumer's Union shows that most Medicare beneficiaries will pay more for prescription drugs in 2007 than they do today. In a *USA Today* poll, a majority of seniors said this plan will not improve their situation, and nearly 20 percent said it will make it worse.

## **Seniors will be at the mercy of insurance companies and HMOs.**

The legislation is designed to make seniors go to private plans for drug coverage. Insurance companies, not Medicare, will determine what drugs are made available and what the costs will be in a given area. The House version leaves seniors with no choice – drug coverage would be available only through private insurance companies or managed care plans. Private plans are proven unreliable and put seniors at risk of higher prices, limited choice and dropped coverage.

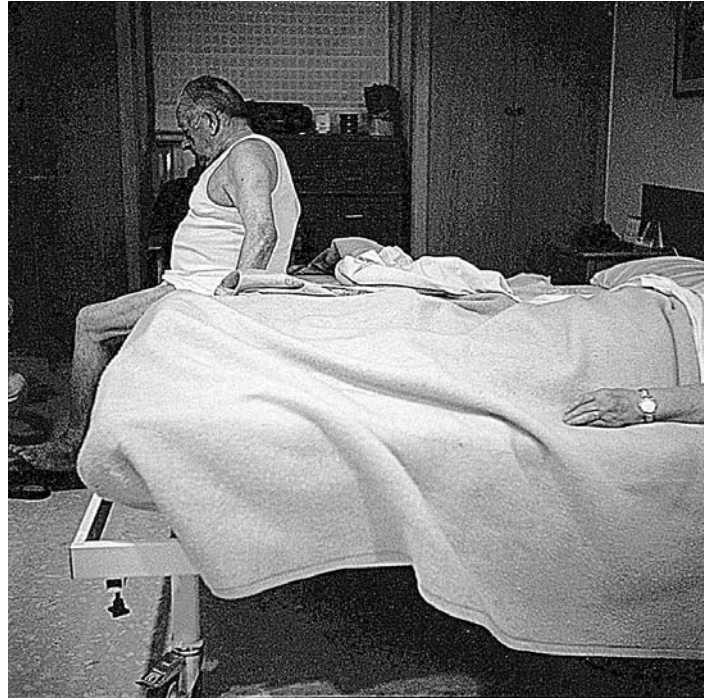
## **Many retirees with employer-provided drug coverage will lose it.**

Because the Bush plan won't fully reimburse employers who provide retiree drug coverage, employers are likely to drop the coverage. According to the Congressional Budget Office,

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# TIME

PHOTOS BY TANIT PLANA

4.4 million retirees stand to lose their existing drug coverage as a result. To make matters worse, the House version includes a tax shelter for "health security savings accounts" that will encourage employers to reduce coverage for current workers as well.

**The Bush plan paves the way to privatizing the Medicare program.** While both bills push private plans for drug coverage, the House version lays the foundation for privatizing the entire Medicare program. Those who don't want to go to private plans or HMOs would have to pay higher premiums and wouldn't be guaranteed the same coverage. The House bill also undermines the universal nature of Medicare by including a "means-testing" provision that would raise costs for some beneficiaries.

**The plan does nothing to control skyrocketing drug costs.** Three quarters of all Americans think the government should set limits on drug prices, and 91 percent say the government should negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices for seniors, according to a recent poll by Lake Snell Perry & Associates. But the Bush plan in Congress would do nothing to control the outrageous prices charged by drug companies, and would even forbid Medicare from negotiating for lower drug prices.

For more information and to take action, visit [www.seiu.org](http://www.seiu.org) or call 1-866-565-1465.





# IN BRIEF

## THE MATRIX GOES ON-LINE

A Florida law enforcement data-sharing network is about to go national. In the name of counterterrorism, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security are pouring millions of dollars into the system to expand it to local law enforcement agencies across the nation. It's called Matrix, which stands for Multistate Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange. According to the *Washington Post*, the computer network accesses information that has always been available to investigators but brings it together and enables police to access it with extraordinary speed. Civil liberties and privacy groups say the Matrix system dramatically increases the ability of local police to snoop on individuals.

## ISRAEL'S APARTHEID WALL

On Aug. 5, over 45 Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights activists were detained while attempting to block the demolition of a Palestinian family's home near the village of Mas'ha.

The home had been slated for demolition by the Israeli Military because it lay in the path of a 230-mile long "security fence" Israel is currently building along the length of the West Bank.

Detainees from the incident were being held at Ariel Prison in the Israeli settlement of Ariel. One Palestinian and one Italian were put under formal arrest.

## BYE-BYE NEWS BOXES: CITY LOOKS TO "TIDY" UP FREE PRESS DISTRIBUTION

In a fascinating but little-noticed article, the *New York Press* recently raised the possibility that New York City's newspaper distribution boxes could soon be a thing of the past — replaced by corporate-run multi-paper racks called "pedmounts."

The July 31 article notes that a recent City Council law regulating street boxes has resulted in the increased city harassment of small paper publishers while big daily papers have largely been left alone.

But that might only be the first step. According to the article, the city potentially "eliminates the old racks by fiat, then bids out a contract to a private company to build and maintain the new pedmount multi-racks. As a cost-saving measure, the cities have allowed the companies to use the space on the back of these racks to place advertisements."

## CAGING THE FIST

Sherman Austin, webmaster of [Raisethefist.com](http://Raisethefist.com), was sentenced on Aug. 4 to one year in federal prison followed by three years of probation. Judge Wilson shocked the courtroom when he went against the recommendation of not only the prosecution, but the FBI and the Justice Department. The government had asked that Austin be sentenced to four months in prison, and four months in a half-way house, with three years of probation.

Sherman was arrested for posting a link from his website to a site that offered information on explosives. FBI agents seized Sherman's network of computers and other [RaisetheFist.com](http://RaisetheFist.com) related material in a January 2002 raid on his home office.



LEIGH BENZALA

# DEATH ON THE BORDER

continued from cover

school. They then make an appointment to visit the woman's home, where they compile information on her schedule and whereabouts in order to place her in a course. Since its representatives approached many of the missing women at one time or another, ECCO is widely suspected of being involved in the disappearances. Despite this, the school remains open under a new name, ERA, and is not under police investigation. Neyra had been a student at the school for a year at the time of her disappearance.

The clearest example of ECCO's involvement is the case of Paloma Angelica Escobar, who was reported missing and found murdered in March of last year. Paloma was last seen on March 3, 2002, in the car of one of ECCO's promoters, Francisco Ramirez Galindo, a block from the school. The witness who saw her, a co-worker at the factory where Paloma and her mother worked, said that Paloma appeared distressed or drugged. Ramirez Galindo's landlord said that he arrived at his home with a young woman in the car that same evening, and left again shortly after. Neither Paloma nor Ramirez Galindo ever returned to Chihuahua City.

Paloma had been a student at ECCO for seven months and had always returned directly home after her classes. Paloma's mother, Norma Ledesma, brought the witness who had seen Paloma to the police, pleading with them to investigate the school. She was told by police chief Mayorga that he knew the school had no connection to Paloma's disappearance and would not investigate the company. The same day Ledesma went to ECCO herself, where she was told three different stories by three different employees and informed that Ramirez Galindo was no longer an employee there.

Ledesma asks, "If the police aren't accomplices to these crimes, how did they know that ECCO wasn't responsible, or at least worth... investigating? Who are they protecting?"

Mayorga is in charge of all the disappeared women's cases, and there is an overwhelming amount of testimony speaking to his negligence and intentional manipulation of the victims' families. "Some of the police officers, the ones who

want to work right, have told us that our phones are tapped, or that Mayorga has specifically told them not to work on our cases. They say they would say more if they didn't have to worry for their own families," says Ledesma.

## AN UNRESPONSIVE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Aside from blatant corruption, department policy of the Mexican police makes the prospects of finding the women nearly nonexistent. Officials do not have to file a report until 48 hours after the disappearance, and even then they are not required to look for the girls — their disappearance isn't a crime until it can be proven that they were kidnapped. In some cases, officers have turned up as late as 26 days after the disappearance to get descriptions of the girls. The women's files, made up of no more than a few pages, contain contradictory statements, false declarations discrediting the women and their families, and statements given by minors without supervision.

Ledesma believes that the community apathy and government indifference result from issues of classism and discrimination in Mexico. "Two years ago, a young girl disappeared, the daughter of the president of Canacintra [Mexico's largest industrial trade association]," says Ledesma. "In less than two hours they had reported her disappearance, and the army was already looking for her. She had the luck that they found her alive. Why? For being the daughter of a rich man? Someone who has thousands more pesos than we do? Why did she have the privilege that the Army searched for her and not our daughters? Our daughters they returned to us dead, as if they were a bag of garbage!"

The complicity of the police may explain why the kidnappers are seemingly fearless. In recent weeks, a 13 and 16-year-old girl separately reported kidnapping attempts to a local NGO. Both girls said masked men in an expensive vehicle drove up to them in broad daylight. One girl was walking to school, while the other was on her way to the supermarket downtown.

Area searches such as the one performed by Neyra's family are organized by mothers of the disappeared and have become common here and in Ciudad Juarez, a border

city five hours north of Chihuahua where more than 450 women have disappeared over the past 10 years. "The work we do isn't just for one girl, but for all the girls and all the mothers," says Ledesma, whose daughter Paloma's disappearance led her to found the organization Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas (Justice for Our Daughters). "The struggle is for everyone."

The mothers of Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas are represented pro bono by two lawyers, Alma Gomez and Lucha Castro, and have presented their testimonies at many national and international human rights conferences, including one in July at the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights. Gomez says while the police "refuse to investigate valid leads, they do not hesitate to harass or arrest the victims involved."

## TORTURED CONFESSIONS

Jose Cirilo Rayas, father of Viviana Rayas, says he is anguished by "the helplessness, the inability to give our daughters justice." Rayas disappeared on March 26, 2002 and was found dead two months later on May 28. The following day, 43-year-old Cynthia Kiecker, an American living in Chihuahua City, was charged in Rayas' murder. She and her partner Ulises Parzabal say they were also tortured by police into signing a confession. Her mother, Carol Kiecker from Minnesota, says Kiecker signed only after officers threatened to anally penetrate her with a wooden stick. Friends of Kiecker and Parzabal were also called in for interviews and tortured. The confessions state that Kiecker murdered Viviana Rayas during a "satanic ritual."

One woman, Erika Perez Azate, signed a confession saying she witnessed the ritual, a statement she later recanted at a press conference. Azate said she had not seen anything, but that police told her that she would never see her son again if she did not sign. Local observers say Parzabal and Kiecker were targeted because they fit into a hippie stereotype, and ran their own craft and jewelry shop in the city. Local officials claim the store sells "occult" goods. Kiecker remains in prison pending trial.

The Rayas and Kiecker families are working together to prove Kiecker's innocence and demonstrate police corruption. "We need international intervention. We cannot fight alone against the level of corruption we are facing," says Rayas.

In the meantime, more and more women are disappearing off the city streets into an unknown fate. In addition, many families are now afraid to give information to the police because they believe it will be used to frame them in the murder of their daughters. Families and activists have also testified that the police in Ciudad Juarez will plant clothing similar to that which they describe in order to show falsely that the remains belongs to a missing daughter.

In recent weeks at least three more young women have been reported missing. "I believe there are even more missing girls," says Ledesma. "There are more but [the families] are afraid to unite with us because the police tell them that if they do they will not look for their daughters."

Often the first action the families take is to put up pictures and posters asking for information about their daughters in the downtown area. Many of the posters asking for information about Neyra remain in the central plaza and the streets by the market. The family says they still have hope of finding her alive.

"We want her to know that we are here waiting for her," says her sister. "We won't stop struggling. What should we be afraid of? What more could we lose?"

For more information about Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas, contact the author at: [justicianow@hotmail.com](mailto:justicianow@hotmail.com)

# DIVVYING UP THE SPOILS BEFORE THE WAR

BY A.K. GUPTA

That the Bush administration was planning the armed invasion of Iraq more than a year before the war actually started is widely known. Now, new evidence coming to light demonstrates the corporate conquest of Iraq was also being carefully planned in advance of the war.

*The Independent* has been shown a classified document from the U.S. Agency for International Development entitled, "Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Sustainable Growth." Obtained by investigative reporter Greg Palast, it details an audacious plan to radically restructure Iraq's economy—oil, banking, telecommunications, healthcare, transport, education, public works, etc.

Behind the plodding rhetoric is the same neo-liberal plan that has been previously implemented with disastrous consequences in Africa, Asia, Latin America and East Europe. The AID plan calls for "mass privatization" of state-owned enterprises, trade liberalization, changing laws to favor the "repatriation of capital" and foreign investment in Iraq, and shifting the tax burden from business to consumers. Reconstruction costs are estimated as high as \$100 billion, but the AID plan allocates a paltry \$8 million to the thousands of

small and medium-owned businesses in Iraq.

The plan dryly notes that any laws impeding such activities as privatization will be changed. Bush has already given oil companies sweeping legal immunity by issuing Executive Order 13303 on May 22. It declares that "any attachment, judgment, decree, lien, execution, garnishment, or other judicial process is prohibited, and shall be deemed null and void," with respect to the U.S.-run Development Fund for Iraq and "all Iraqi petroleum and petroleum products, and interests therein." The language is so broad that Earthrights International states: "a U.S. oil company benefiting from human rights abuses, no matter how egregious, apparently falls within the Order's immunity from suit."

One of the Bush administration's most coveted goals is the dismantling of Iraq's state-owned enterprises, which employ more than 100,000 Iraqis. The AID plan calls for privatizing as many SOEs as possible, and liquidating piecemeal those that can't be sold off intact. The Coalition Provisional Authority has already rescinded subsidies to state-owned enterprises by \$269 million in its budget for the remainder of 2003. Combined with the looting, the lack of security, electricity and water, and a flood of imported goods, state industries are collapsing, making it eas-

ier to place them on the auction bloc.

The AID document's architects display breathtaking cynicism in a section regarding the "Competitiveness Initiative." The CI, as it's referred to, is a recipe for economic shock and awe: deregulation, tariff reduction, privatization. In short, destroying the state's ability to manage the economy and leaving Iraq to the whim of the market. To sell the CI, the AID plan outlines a propaganda campaign: first, by signing "memorandums of understanding" with three Iraqi universities. They would be tasked to produce at least 30 books and 100 articles touting the benefits of unfettered capitalism. While the plan does not say so, the intent is obviously to create the appearance that Iraqis themselves are demanding free-market shock therapy to get the country back on its feet.

Baghdad will be the main lab for the privateers, but the plan outlines exporting the project to at least three "secondary" cities in Iraq. CI personnel will go on a road show, looking for "responsive leadership." If none are found, they will move on to other cities until they can find willing paties for their schemes.

Finding collaborators, however, will be no easy task. It's not just policemen and

informers who are being targeted by the Iraqi resistance. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on Aug. 5 that "Last week, unknown gunmen murdered the newly selected head of the state vegetable oil company. Other company heads are receiving death threats, U.S. officials say."

The AID plan also calls for expanding Iraq's export earnings beyond oil, mentioning the agricultural and textile sectors. The two are revealing choices. Overseeing agriculture in Iraq is Dan Amstutz, a former senior executive at Cargill. The British aid group Oxfam says of Amstutz: "This guy is uniquely well placed to advance the commercial interests of American grain companies and bust open the Iraqi market." The result would likely entail throwing off the land many of Iraq's hundreds of thousands of small farmers.

As far as textiles goes, it is one of the lowest-paying export industries in the world, dominated by countries like China and Indonesia. It's hard to see how Iraq could compete unless its new overseers have in mind free-trade zones devoid of capital controls, environmental regulation, taxation, workplace safety and unions. Then again, maybe that's precisely what they have in mind when they say "liberation."

## SELLING IRAQ

COMPANY'S CONTRACTS TO REBUILD IRAQ AND THEIR CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS\*



### Bechtel Group Inc.

\$769,221 to Republicans (\$6,250 to Bush)

\$34.6 million initial award, funding of up to \$680 million over 18 months subject to Congress' approval, for rebuilding power generation facilities, electrical grids, water and sewage systems, and airport facilities in Iraq.

### DynCorp / Computer Sciences Corp.

(acquired DynCorp March 7)

DynCorp: \$163,342 to Republicans (\$7,500 to Bush) / Computer Sciences Corp.: \$204,961 to Republicans (\$10,250 to Bush)

Multimillion-dollar contract: DynCorp estimates it will get up to \$50 million with the first year to advise the Iraqi government on setting up effective law enforcement, judicial and correctional agencies along with any logistical or technical support necessary.

### Halliburton Co. subsidiary Kellogg, Brown & Root

\$673,331 to Republicans (\$17,677 to Bush), VP Dick Cheney receives \$1 million annually as former CEO

Open-ended contract: Awarded without a bidding process. No specified time or dollar limit but some estimates go as high as \$7 billion. Main contract to fight oil-well fires and reconstruct oilfields in Iraq.

\*Figures represent total contributions made between 1999 and 2002, and include PAC, soft money and individual contributions to federal candidates, party committees and leadership PACs.

## WORLD TRADE ORC.

# CANCUN: THE IRON FIST OF FREE TRADE

BY CATRIONA STUART

If the World Trade Organization holds a meeting in the woods, does it make a sound? The United States and European Union certainly hope that if it did, no one noticed.

Since the last round of WTO negotiations in Doha, Qatar nearly two years ago, the world's most powerful nations have been stealthily preparing for the 5th WTO Ministerial to be held in Cancun this September. Holding hastily scheduled meetings in remote corners of the globe, such as a recent one in Canada, safe from protesters and smaller nations alike, powerful coalitions are conspiring to push through controversial changes.

### THE ISSUES

The Cancun agenda encompasses everything from foreign investment and patent rights to trade barriers. The stakes are dangerously high for developing countries. "The issue isn't just about tariffs and quotas anymore, this is about setting rules over what countries can do domestically," says Chris Slevin, of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch program.

Agriculture is shaping up to be one of the most contentious issues. Arguments between the United States and the European Union over the importation of genetically modified crops

have led to a simmering trade war. Less-developed nations have even greater stakes in the debate. They want an end to the dumping of farm goods by U.S. and E.U.-subsidized agribusinesses. Peter Rosset of Food First, a non-profit think tank working on hunger-related issues, says subsidies have decreased the price of wheat by 50 percent below production costs and corn by 20 percent, making it impossible for small farmers to compete.

Africa continues its call for assistance in combating the HIV-AIDS crisis. In Doha, much excitement generated around the TRIPS and Health Declaration, which allowed member countries to import or manufacture generic drugs for "public health crises." Since then, however, the United States has sought to limit what is considered a public health crisis, and has pushed African representatives to negotiate directly with the pharmaceutical giants.

At the center of the Cancun negotiations is a proposal similar to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment that was defeated by a highly organized public campaign in 1998. Bill Rosenberg of the Seattle to Brussels Network likens the plan to the MAI "wearing a trendy development t-shirt."

Essentially designed to protect foreign investors and allow them a controlling hand in developing economies, the agreement would limit the ability of governments to regulate such investments within their own

borders. The investment agreement is a U.S. and E.U. priority, but something developing nations want to avoid.

"No convincing arguments have yet been put forward" in favor of the proposed agreement, said the Indian Ambassador to the WTO of the proposed agreement. "Differences of opinion still abound, even amongst proponents. Further commitments in such a major area could prove to be disastrous for developing countries."

### MANIPULATING THE SYSTEM

In July, 10 civil society groups presented a "Cancun Democracy Challenge" to WTO officials and representatives. The document highlights 12 points for improving inclusiveness and transparency in decision-making and process. Specifically targeting the use of "mini-ministerials," such as the one in Canada, the groups say such informal practices allow more powerful countries to marginalize developing nations.

According to Aileen Kwa, a policy analyst with Focus on the Global South, this is business as usual. "The same strategies were used in the run-up to Doha, and they worked." She says that the details of negotiations "would shock any one who assumes that this international institution functions in a civilized and democratic manner."

Walden Bello, a noted critic of the WTO, says that at Doha the United States and

European Union forced smaller countries into supporting free trade. Bello explained that Western governments threatened developing nations with a complete cutoff in aid and access to foreign markets if they did not accept the big powers' agenda.

While resistance to these strong-arm tactics is growing within the WTO, grassroots pressure continues to build.

"What we can do is spread information," says Victor Menotti, program director of the International Forum on Globalization, a California-based NGO that is organizing information forums in Cancun. "By far the biggest force [on the ground] will be the campesinos who have been hit very hard by NAFTA... they are very organized, and very numerous."

Other grassroots organizations such as the People's Forum for Alternatives to the WTO (www.omcmexico.org), and the Cancun Welcoming Committee (www.cancun-committee.org) have formed in recent months to educate people about the impact of these potential agreements.

"The function of the WTO is like the bicycle analogy, it either has to go forward or fall over; it can't survive without making new agreements. If we can manage to pull just one strategic string then it would be a great victory," said Menotti.

Additional reporting provided by the Comité de Bienvenida in Mexico.



# EL INDEPENDIENTE



## AQUÍ MANDA EL PUEBLO

MUNICIPIOS AUTÓNOMOS REBELDES ZAPATISTAS

POR LYDIA NERI

El día del noveno aniversario del primer "Aguascalientes," que fuera inaugurado el 8 de agosto de 1994 por el comandante Tacho, a nombre del Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena- Comandancia General del EZLN, se decreta formalmente la muerte de los 5 "Aguascalientes" y nacen en su lugar los "Caracoles": El "Caracol" de la Realidad, El "Caracol" de Morelia, El "Caracol" de la Garucha, El "Caracol" de Roberto Barrios y El "Caracol" de Oventik.

El anuncio fue hecho por el Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, a quien 30 Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas solicitaron fuera su portavoz temporal. Marcos invitó a la comunidad nacional e internacional, que en estos casi 10 años ha apoyado a las comunidades rebeldes zapatistas, a la fiesta de celebración de la muerte de los "Aguascalientes" y a la inauguración de los 5 "Caracoles" y sus "Juntas de Buen Gobierno" a realizarse en Oventik, Municipio Autónomo de San Andrés Sakamchén de Los Pobres, Chiapas México, los días 8, 9 y 10 de agosto del 2003. El Sup pide además a quienes vayan, carguen con su radio de onda corta, porque el día 9 de agosto a una hora todavía no decidida se escuchará la primera emisión intergaláctica de "Radio Insurgente, La Voz del EZLN" en la banda de 49 metros, en los 5.8 mhz. Aunque seguramente también podrán sintonizar en el 97.9 de FM, las transmisiones de Radio Insurgente: "La Voz de los Sin Voz", de las comunidades Zapatistas.

El radio no se ve, pero en cada "Caracol" se distingue perfectamente una nueva construcción, la llamada "Junta de Buen Gobierno" que representa el esfuerzo organizativo de las comunidades, no sólo para enfrentar los problemas de la autonomía sino también para construir un puente directo entre ellas y el mundo.

Entre algunas de las funciones de las "Juntas de Buen Gobierno" estarán la de contrarrestar el desequilibrio en el desarrollo de los municipios autónomos y de las comunidades; vigilar la realización de proyectos y tareas comunitarias, cuidando que se cumplan los tiempos y formas acordados por las comunidades; atender y guiar a la sociedad civil nacional e internacional para visitar comunidades, llevar adelante proyectos productivos, instalar campamentos de paz y realizar investigaciones que traigan beneficio a las comunidades.

El papel principal de las "Juntas de Buen Gobierno" será el de "cuidar que en territorio Rebelde Zapatista el que mande, mande obedeciendo". Como reza el letrero en la entrada del "Caracol" de Oventik: "Está usted en Territorio Rebelde Zapatista: Aquí manda el pueblo y el gobierno obedece."



## GUERRERO AZTECA POR LAS VÍCTIMAS DE LA ILEGALIDAD

POR MIGUEL ERB

Existen aproximadamente 37, 000 personas en el ejército de Estados Unidos que no cuentan con ciudadanía estadounidense, la mayoría son latinos. De estos, por lo menos 10 han muerto en servicio durante la guerra en Irak. Ésta es la historia de uno de ellos.

Jesús A. Suárez del Solar Navarro nació en la Ciudad de Tijuana BC. México el 16 de Noviembre de 1982. Emigró a Escondido, California, junto con su familia en 1997 y se graduó con honores la Valley High School de esa ciudad. Ingresó a los Marines en el 2001 y partió a Irak el 5 de Febrero del 2003. Cayó en combate el 27 de Marzo. Jesús recibió su carta de ciudadanía *post mortem*.

Entrevistamos a su padre, Fernando Suárez del Solar, quien ha creado la Fundación Guerrero Azteca, la cual se opone decididamente a la guerra y apoya a las familias hispanas con familiares en Servicio.

**El Independiente: Nos podría contar cómo se incorporó su hijo al ejército y cuáles eran sus ideales y planes para el futuro.**

Fernando Suárez: "Nosotros venimos a los Estados Unidos únicamente para que mi hijo Jesús y mi hija Olivia cumplieran su sueño de enrolarse en el servicio militar en este país. Ellos consideraban que de esa forma podrían ayudar a combatir el tráfico de drogas a nivel mundial. El sueño de ellos era poder servir a la humanidad, no solamente a Estados Unidos. Mi hija no se enroló, ya que se casó, pero Jesús estudió mucho en la escuela para poder graduarse con honores y lo logró. Él calificaba para becas en *colleges* y universidades, pero prefirió el cuerpo de *Marines*, ya que existen grupos de combate a la droga a nivel mundial. Él no se metió por dinero ni por ayuda para estudiar, claro que el reclutador no le dijo toda la verdad, pero ya sé que así actúan ellos. Él quería después de los 4

años que firmó, ingresar al cuerpo de bomberos de Escondido, California, y así continuar ayudando a las personas. Él era un joven de principios morales muy sólidos y siempre buscó la forma de ayudar a los demás. Siempre estuvo muy orgulloso de su herencia mexicana, de su herencia azteca, Por eso el nombre de Guerrero Azteca".

**¿Con qué objetivo ha creado la Fundación Guerrero Azteca (F.G.A.)?**

"La Fundación nace después de que el ejército no nos quería pagar completos los gastos del sepelio de Jesús. La gente empezó a mandarme donativos y al ver esto, el ejército terminó pagando la totalidad de los servicios. Entonces me sentí con una gran responsabilidad ante la comunidad. Empecé a mandarles dinero a otras familias hispanas que estaban pasando lo mismo que la mía. También asistí y continúo asistiendo a las escuelas, foros, iglesias, para hablar sobre lo importante que es la paz, que las guerras solo sirven para destruir; en las guerras no hay triunfadores, sólo víctimas. También vi la necesidad de ayuda psicológica a familias con hijos en la guerra, ya que el ejército nunca se acercó a nosotros ofreciéndola. Empecé a conocer a padres de familia con hijos en Irak y al preguntarles si tenían apoyo psicológico, todos contestaban lo mismo: ¡NO! Entonces surgió la segunda acción concreta del la F.G.A. y se creó el Grupo de Apoyo a Familias Hispanas con miembros en Servicio. Actualmente asisto a cuanto foro puedo para dar el mensaje de paz que mi hijo me heredó. He asistido a conferencias nacionales sobre la paz y la justicia en las ciudades de Chicago y Filadelfia. Y también hablé con algunos senadores en Sacramento, California."

**¿Cuál es su posición ante la actual intervención militar estadounidense en Irak?**

"Me opongo a la intervención militar en Irak, ya que considero que no es el camino

para establecer un mundo de justicia y democracia, para eso se formó la ONU, la cual nunca dio el visto bueno a esta intervención armada. Las razones que el Presidente Bush dio para esta guerra no son válidas, están llenas de mentiras, cosa que poco a poco se ha develado, como el informe de la CIA, lleno de mentiras. Además el Congreso no votó en forma unánime para esta intervención".

**¿Qué efecto tiene esta invasión para los inmigrantes mexicanos o latinos en general?**

"La forma que esta guerra está afectando a mi comunidad hispana y a toda la población, se refleja en las grandes cantidades de dinero que utiliza la administración Bush en la guerra, y la escasez de empleos, espacios y apoyos educativos en toda la nación. Considero que no es justo que una bomba cueste cerca de \$300.000.00 mientras en California despiden maestros por falta de dinero; cortan servicios comunitarios por falta de recursos, etc. Esa es una de las maneras en que afecta a nuestra comunidad, que como siempre, es la más vulnerable. Nuestros hijos son los primeros en la línea de fuego, y como las estadísticas lo marcan, la pérdida de vidas humanas es muy grande.

Por eso estoy en lucha constante contra esta guerra ilegal, por el retorno de nuestros soldados, por que se dé el apoyo necesario a todas las familias de militares y en su idioma. Que quede muy claro, ¡ESTOY EN CONTRA DE LA GUERRA, MÁS NUNCA EN CONTRA DE NUESTRAS TROPAS! Ellos son las primeras víctimas de esta ilegalidad."



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